Some Account of Greenland and Labrador with a special reference to the operations of Christian Missionaries in those Countries.

II

Greenland and Labrador are comprehended between the parallels of 50 and 80 N. Lat.; and between the meridians of 22 and 77 West Long. from Greenwich. An arm of the Atlantic Ocean is the N.E. bound any of Labrador, and the same arm together with Davis' Straits and Baffin's bay is the S.W. bound any of Greenland. The Atlantic is the East-ern bound any of both. Labrador is bounded Westwardly by Hudson's and Davis' bays; and Greenland Westwardly by Baffin's bay and unexplored region of N. America. About 300 miles from the East Coast of Greenland is situated the island of Iceland.

The progress of discovery has been slower in the N.rn than in the S.rn sections of the Western Continent. In 1496 Giovanni Gabato a Venetian (whose name has been anglicized into John Cabot) having obtained from Henry 7th of England a commission for himself and three sons — "to navigate all parts of the Ocean, for the purpose of discovering islands, regions, and provinces, either of Gentiles or Infidels, who had hitherto been unknown to all Christian people; with power to set up his standard and take possession of the same as vassals of the Crown of England;" — Sailed from Eng.d with his three sons for the purpose of discovering a N.W. passage to China: the voyage however terminated with his falling in with the N. side of the coast of Labrador, wh. he traced northw.ds as far as the sixty seventh degree of Lat.de.

All that is known of Labrador is a map of mountains and of rocks, intersected with innumerable lakes and rivers.

This country is a frozen one. All the waters of this region abound in a remarkable degree with fish among wh are noticed the Salmon, trout, pike, cod, and barbel. The bears combine together to catch the Salmon near the Cataracts where great numbers are stopt in their ascent, and are exceedingly destroyed by that animal. The air is milder in the interior of the country, where some appearance of fertility is perceived. A most extraordinary fact, wh however requires further confirmation, is that the boggy land along the coast becomes covered with grass, after having been fattened (with) by the carcases of the fishes that are cast ashore. — The Southern parts of Labrador might be cultivated but it would be difficult to defend the Colonists against bears and wolves. The eastern coast is covered with thousands of islands inhabited by Aquatic birds particularly the eider duck so valuable for its down.

The Esquimaux have peopled all the N. and E. coasts of Labr. and live on fish. A peculiar tribe inhabits the S. mountains who have been compared to the Egyptians; but a mixture with the French Canadians effaced their characteristic features before they were examined with sufficient care. This tribe has adopted the R. Cath. religion: — they are called the Mountaineers. Another tribe called Escopies inhabit the Western part. — The most remarkable production of Labrador is the felspar, discovered by the Moravian Bren in the middle of the Lakes of the elevated district of Kyllgapied, where its vivid colours are reflected from the bottom of the water. The dogs are as serviceable to the Esquimaux as horses are to us. Several are fastened by long traces, to a sledge; one dog of superior sagacity leads the team at the rate of four or five miles an hour. Without reins, they are directed by the voice & long whip of the driver. When he gives one dog a blow, he bites the next dog, and so the bite goes on. — The snow is so hardened by the extreme cold that it can be cut into square slabs with which they build houses. A small hole is the entrance & by wh the Esquimaux enters on all fours; a slab of ice the door; and a broad piece of transparent pieth water ice is the window wh also forms part of the roof. Though these people display much ingenuity in constructing their huts, fishing-tackle, and hunting implements, they are disgustingly dirty in all their habits: every species of filth is to be found in their huts; and large puddles formed of the pieces of thawing and

half putrid walrus, or seahorse, and seal flesh, are not uncommon. The seal constitutes a considerable part of their food and clothing, and is indeed their only certain support during the greater portion of the severe winters. - The seal is taken with a spear when he raises his head and shoulders out of the water in an opening through the ice wh the seal makes and keeps constantly clear. - The walrus is taken with a harpoon fastened to a large mass of floating ice on wh the hunter sits. When the Esquimaux has succeeded in his hunting he will eat most voraciously - sometimes 'till he can no longer stand; and when he is compelled to lie down, the wife not unfrequently is employed in filling his mouth, 'till having stuffed in as much as she can, (the husband pleasantly grunting the while) she eats the remainder even with his lips. - They pass much of their time in sleep; for in addition to the many inconveniences arising from their climate they are in the most degraded state of mind. They believe in the existence of a devil and, being under the spiritual dominion of abominable sorcerers, hired & trained, such as strangling and killing human victims, & throwing them into the sea are committed by them with the hope of appeasing the devil. -

In 1752 a party of Moravian missionaries sailed from London and entered a fine bay on the east coast of Labrador; there they determined to settle, and called the place Hope Dale. A few weeks afterwards one of them sailed farther to the north, for the purposes of trade, when landing with five of the crew, they were all murdered by the Esquimaux. It is true that the Esquimaux are heathen, but their general habits are mild; it is probable therefore that they had previously been ill treated by some European crews, or that they mistook the Missionary and five sailors for N. American Indians. By this melancholy circumstance the colony was destroyed for a time, because the remaining Missionaries were obliged to return with the captain to work the ship, instead of the men who had been murdered. However, in 1764, they

were visited by Jens Haven who had learned the Greenland
language. His reception, in his own words, was this "Sept. 4,
Saturday," was the welcome day when I saw an Esquimaux ap-
-proach in his boat; I ran to meet him, addressed him in the
most friendly manner in the Greenland language, and
to my inexpressible joy found that he understood me.
I desired him to return, and to bring with him four of the
chiefs of his tribe, to whom he readily consented. Meanwhile
I put on my Greenland dress and met them on the beach
inviting them to come on shore. They cried 'here is an
Esquimaux a countryman of ours' I answered 'I am your
countryman and friend'. They seemed astonished, behaved
very quietly, and I continued the conversation for a long
time. At length they desired me to accompany them to
an island about an hour's row from the shore, adding,
that there I should find their wives and children who would
receive me as a friend. This appeared rather a hazardous un-
-dertaking, but conceiving it to be of essential importance to the
Mission cause that I should venture my life among them
and endeavour to be more better acquainted with their na-
-ture, I confidently turned to God in prayer, and thought
within myself, 'I will go with them in thy name'; if they
kill me, my work on earth will be done, and I shall live
with thee. Accordingly went, and as soon as we arrived there
they all set up a shout, 'Our friend is come'. They carried
me on shore, and surrounded me so closely on all sides,
that I could neither stir nor turn. Having prevailed
on them to place themselves in rows before me, I explained
to them my object in going to visit them, promising, that
if they were willing to be taught, I would return the
next spring with many of my brethren, build a house
on their land, and daily converse with them on the
way to life and happiness." - Jens Haven returned to
Labrador next year and preached to several hundred
Esquimaux, one of whom was sent to England, where he died
of the small pox, having first delighted the Missionaries by
his conversion to the true faith. - He died in the act of
fervent prayer. - It seems a Miss. settlement was not yet
made in Labrador, for Nikak the mother of this convert
-ted Esquimau after this, meeting the Miss. Jens Haven

in England importuned him to return and help her poor countrymen. Her repeated applications to those persons in power, by whom she was noticed, had considerable influence in forwarding the Mission and an order was given in May 1769, granting a tract of land to the Society of United Brn. who wished to settle among the Esquimaux. After two years residence among them they were gratified by some appearance of improvement, particularly in the conversion of a most ferocious, murderous appearance, named Ardluke.—

In the month of August, 1821, the missionaries and their Converts in Labrador, celebrated a kind of Jubilee on account of its being then the fiftieth year of their mission in that Country. (~~the Jubilee~~) In 1822 one of the missionaries writes "The Lord has been graciously pleased to lay a special blessing on the preaching of the gospel and our labours among the dear Esquimaux. This Congregation is at present in a prosperous State.—

Let us now take a brief view of the origin and progress of missionary labour in Greenland: and conclude with a short Sketch of the present State of the Missions both in Greenland and Labrador.—

In the year 982 Greenland was visited by Eric Rauda, a Norwegian, from whom Eric Sound receives its name. After remaining in the country three years, he returned to Iceland and in order to encourage persons to settle there, gave a flattering, but false account of its productions and appearance, and called it Greenland.— This description induced numbers to settle in it, and shortly afterwards, Christianity was introduced by two British missionaries; and in the year 1121, the colony reached from Cape Farewell, the most southern part of Greenland, along a line of coast between two and three hundred miles in extent on each side of the Peninsula; on the east coast a hundred and twenty hamlets were planted, and on the west an hundred and ten. So that the country soon became thickly inhabited. But of these villages scarcely any remains are to be found, & the fate of the inhabitants is uncertain. Some suppose that the ice blocked up the coast, and thus prevented the arrival of the ships annually sent from Europe with provisions

for the colony; and that consequently the inhabitants perished for want of food: others think that a dreadful malady, called the Black death, wh. ravaged Europe, destroyed the colonists; a third supposition is, that they were cut off by the wild Greenlanders. - And, after all, there is reason to hope that they are not totally extinct. - The Danes made several fruitless attempts to reach the eastern coast of Greenland, hoping to discover the poor Norwegians, whom they still suspected to be living. At length, in the year 1708, Mr Hans Egede, a Danish Clergyman, was so affected by the considerate that the ancient inhabitants, if there were any, would relapse into heathenism through the want of teachers, that he formed the design of visiting them. Dissuaded by wife and friends, for a time he stifled the convictions of his conscience. At length he broke through all obstacles; gave up his living ~~expended to Drag~~ upon wh. he depended for the support of himself and family; moved to Bergen, a sea port town; and, after unsuccessful attempts with the merchants, met with an unexpected friend in the King of Denmark, by whose bounty he was enabled to fit out a Ship. On the 2d of May 1721, he sailed with his wife, four small children, and 50 persons under his command. On his arrival he had to learn the language of the Greenlanders, & having an escort named Kina ~~asked~~ what is this?, he could take up, or point to, diff.t objects, & by inquiring "Kina" learn the names of them gradually the language. The prospects of success of Hans Egede was apparently nothing - the most perfect dark. He had however gained the respect and confidence of the natives. But the death of King Frederic, his patron, damped his hopes. The government resolved to abandon the undertaking, and in 1731 gave orders to recall the colonists. Egede however resolved to remain, and, providentially the ship, that was sent to remove the people, was not large enough to hold them all, so that ten men and some provisions were left with him. In two years afterwards, his faith & patience were rewarded by the arrival of a ship with supplies from the King of Denmark, and, what was still more encouraging, with three Moravian missionaries to help him in his work and labour of love.

Greenland is in reality nothing more than a mass of rocks intermingled with immense blocks of ice, thus forming at once the image and chaos of winter. An uninterrupted chain of mountains traverses the part of Greenland with wh. we are acquainted. Greenland furnishes us with a new and curious mineral, the fluate of alumine. A vast mine of sea coal has been discovered in the island of Disco. Three hot springs are the only volcanic indications that have hitherto been observed. The flattering glimmer of the aurora borealis in some degree softens the gloomy horror of the polar night. There is some land that admits of cultivation. The parts of the mountains that have a Southern exposure produce very good herbs, gooseberries & other berries in abundance. Among the animal kingdom we met with large hares, rein deer, white bears, foxes, and large dogs wh. howl instead of barking, and are employed by the Greenlanders in drawing their sledges. An immense number of aquatic birds live near the rivers wh. abound with salmon; while turbots & small herrings swarm in every direction in the sea. — The Greenlander makes the flesh of the seal his principal food; its skin furnishes him with dress, and at the same time he constructs boats out of it. Thread is made of its tendons, and its bladder is converted into bottles; its fat is sometimes used as a substitute for butter, and at other times for tallow; and even the blood itself is considered by the Greenlander as excellent for making broth; in fact he cannot possibly comprehend how any one can live without the seal, wh., to him, is like the bread fruit to the Otaheitan, or wheat to the inhabitant of Europe. -

The native Greenlanders are of a low stature, have long black hair, small eyes, a flat face, and a yellowish brown skin. They are a branch of the Esquimaux or Savageides of America; as their appearance & language prove. The particularities & inflections of their language are as numerous and varied as those of the Greeks; and they use many harsh sounds. The dialect of the northern Greenlanders is scarcely intelligible to those of the South. The Greenlanders sometimes call themselves Innouk, or brothers; but

their true national name appears to be Kalalit, and they generally designate their country by the appellation of Kalalit Nouret.

The Greenlanders live in houses built of large stones, having the interstices filled with turf and fine earth, and over the whole sealskins spread. The whole house is divided into eight or ten apartments, each of wh. contains a family. These apartments are divided from each other by skins hung along the posts wh. support the roof; and resemble the stalls of our stables. A narrow passage to the outside is the chimney and only entrance into the house. A stone lamp with a wick of dried moss supplies them with both light and heat; and over this lamp is hung a vessel in wh. they boil food, and a rack where they dry their clothes. Although so many are crowded into one apartment they are remarkable for stillness and order. In Summer they live in sealskin tents. ~~They seem to be calculated from the~~ all

~~change~~ They do not seem to be chargeable with that uncleanness wh. is so disgusting among the inhabits of Labrador — ~~(illegible)~~ although they dress nearly as meanly. They seem somewhat neat in the arrangement of their summer tents; and the poor they are active.—

But they were little removed from the brute creation in intellectual acquirements. They knew scarcely any thing of the true God, but supposed that two great Spirits govern the world, the one good, the other evil; their chief dependence was placed on their Angekoks or Sorcerers, who impose on the simplicity and ignorance of the people in every possible way.— They believe that the Moon and Sun are brother and sister. Contrary to common opinion they make the Moon the brother & represent him as continually chasing the Sun his sister with the vain hope of overtaking her. He, the Moon, called Anninga is supposed to rejoice when women die; and Malina, the Sun, in revenge, rejoices when men die.— Therefore the men keep at home when the Sun is eclipsed, & the women during an eclipse of the Moon.— During an eclipse of the Sun, the men skulk in terror into the darkest corners, while the women prick the ears of their dogs, and if they cry out, it is a sure omen that the end of the world is not yet come; for as dogs

ex is ted before men, according to Greenland logic they must have a quicker foresight into futurity. Should the dogs be hunte (wh. of course they never are under such ill treatment) then the dissolution of all things must be at hand.

Such was the country, and such the inhabitants among whom the German Moravian missionaries resolved to settle — We before stated the proceedings of Mr Egede — his discouragements, and the reward of his faith & patience in the arrival of missionaries and supplies. On their arrival they fixed on a place for their habitation who they called New Hernnhut in remembrance of their settlement in Germany. After having knelt down and invoked the blessing of God, they soon built a house with the wood who they had brought from Copenhagen, and likewise a Greenland dwelling to receive such of the natives as might come to them for instruction. But the missionaries did not understand the Greenland language:— the natives were too ignorant to teach them; and Mr Egede, the Danish minister, not being acquainted with German could not instruct them: so they were obliged to learn Danish before they could understand their instructor. During the first five years of their residence little progress was made in any way. In the year 1733 Christian David, Christian Stachler & Matthew Stach undertook a mission to Greenland & the year 1734 two new assistants arrived from Europe, (Frederic Boenish and John Beck) who revived their drooping spirits with the assurance that their brethren at Hernhut in Germany, intended to support the mission to the utmost of their power. They applied more diligently to the study of the language; and soon began to know enough about it to talk with the natives on common matters. Yet even then they could not speak on religious subjects, for the Greenlanders had no words for God and heaven, salvation and pardon; and knowing nothing of religion in their hearts they could not converse together. In time, however, they read to them the ten commandments, the Lord's prayer, and the creed. But though they could not make the poor people understand their doctrines, they became more friendly, and were always glad to see them. Some were disposed to mock, but the kindness of the miss.rs was coals of fire: & the flinty heart sometimes melted & owned the power of love. — To fish, and hunt, to provide food & clothing was the sole object of the Greenlanders. They thought little and cared less about their souls.

The missionaries were supplied from Europe; and in the year 1735 the ship arrived, but brought no supplies. Their store of provisions being very reduced they endeavoured to buy Seals of the Greenlanders; but the barbarians, seeing their wants, refused to sell. Thus they were reduced to great straits, not understanding the management of the Kajak or small, curiously-constructed, one-oared boat, which but those who make them can use well. are employed in Catching the Seal. With the Bible in their hands, however, they did not despair: and at this Critical juncture a strange Greenlander, named Ippegan, came forty leagues from the South and sold them all the fish he could spare. This man had formerly seen & heard the Missrs: and remembered them, tho' they had forgotten him. He discovered their distress and lost no time in relieving it. "The Lord will provide". At another time they narrowly escaped being all murdered by the Greenlanders. The natives at a distance were stupid and ignorant, and those in the neighbourhood were more than ever averse from religious instruction: sometimes they said "shew us the God you talk about, then we will believe in him and serve him: how can we go to see who is invisible? he will not trouble himself about us". At length in the year 1738 a solitary instance of amendment revived their spirits. Now God's blessing was given in answer to their many prayers. The heathens became curious to know the contents of a translation & part of the Gospels which Mr Beck was copying. The Missionaries now began to discover that they had not pursued the best method of preaching. As the Greenlanders were ignorant of God, on their first arrival they had deemed it necessary to explain to them the character of the true God & the necessity of obeying his commandments: & intending afterwards to lead their minds to the Gospel. But Mr Beck, (having read to them out of the N. T. the history of our Saviour's agony) & (having given them an account of the creation, fall & redemption,) one of them, Kayarnak, was so affected that he stepped up to the table, and in an earnest manner exclaimed "how was that? I should like to hear that again; tell me once more, for I too desire to be saved". Now the Missionaries preached Christ — a suffering, a merciful Saviour: — repentance, & faith in him. And

the Greenlander related, confessed himself a sinner, and rejoiced in the gift of redemption through a Saviour. The missionaries had endeavoured to recall them from their vices and profligacy, but with little success; now a Saviour's love constrained them to obey his commandments. The Greenlanders are naturally remarkably fearful of death; but the Gospel soon overcame their fear. Now they began to live for another world.

In the year 1747 the first church was erected in Greenland, capable of holding three hundred persons; the frame and boards of which had been sent for to Europe. It was soon crowded. The fruit of their labours appeared in several cases remarkable. Christian Charity displayed itself among them in the following remarkable manner. On account of being read to the congregation at New Herrnhut, of the destruction of the Negro's settlement among the Indians at Gnadenhuetten, in the U. S., they were so affected, that they burst into loud weeping, and offered to make contributions among themselves for the poor sufferers — "I have a fine rein-deer skin which I will give" said one; and another "I have a new pair of rein deer boots which I will send". A third added "I will send them a deal, that they may have something to eat and light their lamps with". — Truly Ity is the same everywhere. — The name of their ancient divinity, Torngarsoak to whom they never offered any worship, is already forgotten; as well as the malevolent goddess, without a name, who was supposed to inhabit a palace at the bottom of the sea, guarded by terrific seadogs. The priests and sorcerers are daily loosing influence. They begin to give up the prevalent belief that there is a paradise where, where the soul, in a state of happy indolence, is nourished with the heads of sea dogs. Christian Charity has overcome that selfishness which led them to neglect the sick, and dying, and aged. —

In 1730 Paul, the son of Hans Egede published a Greenland dictionary, and in 1760 a Greenland testament. In 1786 there were ten Lutheran ministers in the Country, and 20 Catechists and School masters. Since then the number of Lutheran ministers & catechists has decreased. —

I have not been able to ascertain that any other denomination of Christians besides the Lutherans and Moravians had part in the missionary exertions in Greenland & Labrador. —

There are five Stations of the Miss.ns of the United Brn on the Coast of Labrador. At Okkak one of these stations the number of inhabitants is 388 Esquimaux, of whom 314 are members of the Congregation. It is to be remembered that with Moravians there is a difference between being received into the Congregation and being admitted to the Holy Communion.—
The last Settlement that has been formed, Hopedale is at Kangertluksoak and is of very recent date. At Nain another station the numb. of inhabitants is 245; of Communicant members 100. At Hopedale the fourth Station many have become Christians — and in the last intelligence wh. we have from that Station, is included an expression of the warmest thanks of the Miss.ns to the B. & F. Bible Society, for printing for the use of the mission the Psalms of David in the Esquimaux language. There is also a Station at Hebron. The whole number of Brethren & Sisters employed in the Moravian Mission Labrador is 26.—
In Greenland the Moravian Brn have four Stations; one at New Herrnhut; one at Lichtenfels, one at Lichtenau, and one at Fredericksthal — 22 brethren.—
The Moravian mission both in Greenland and Labrador seems to enjoy the smiles of Heav to whom the heathen shall be given for an inheritance & the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.— The minutes of their present deputations however I have not been able to obtain.—

Note The contents of this Essay may be found in a publication of the Am. S.S. Union called "Moravian Missions, — Malte Brun's Geography, — and one of the late Nos of the 'United Brethren's Missionary Intelligencer' — conjointly. James Clarke.

Missionary Essay
on
Greenland & Labrador

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